

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the final Office Action dated May 12, 2009. Claims 1 to 66 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 6, 15, 17, 29 to 31, 36, 45, 47 and 59 to 66 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 66 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Without conceding the correctness of the rejection, Applicants submit that the foregoing amendments obviate the rejection. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Claims 1 to 5, 31 to 35 and 61 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0032092 (Calver) alone, or in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,754,857 (Gadol). Claims 6 to 30, 36 to 60 and 62 to 66 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Calver in view of Gadol and further in view of eFlow article (March 2000). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

Referring specifically to claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to an information processing apparatus which communicates with an approval service provider terminal. The information processing apparatus includes receiving means for receiving an approval service object from the approval service provider terminal, the approval service object including a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider terminal. The information processing apparatus further includes storage

means for storing the approval service object received by the receiving means, and approval request preparing means for preparing an approval request based on values entered by a user of the information processing apparatus. The information processing apparatus also includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve the prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to the decision condition included in the stored approval service object, and output means for outputting a result of the decision of the decision means.

Claims 31 and 61 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the apparatus of Claim 1.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or suggest all the features of Claims 1, 31 and 61, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object.

In this regard, Calver is merely seen to disclose a method and system for a small business web-based portal. The web-based portal has an intermediate questionnaire which permits a user to tailor his or her experience to his or her own business needs. The intermediate questionnaire helps to identify the types of products that can benefit a user. (See paragraphs [0054], [0062] and [0082] to [0084] of Calver). In addition, the web-based portal has a homepage which is divided into various financial and business categories that a user can access according to his or her needs. However, Calver is not

seen to disclose or suggest an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object.

Gadol is not seen to remedy the above-described deficiencies of Calver. In this regard, Gadol is seen to disclose a system and method for automating a workflow by distributing tasks required for execution of the workflow over servers and clients connected on a network. Once a workflow initiated by a user has been initiated by a database server, stages of the workflow can be executed on respective network clients without further interaction with the server by using a workflow courier. After each stage is executed, the client executing that stage updates the workflow courier and transmits the updated workflow courier to a client having an associated user who is authorized to perform a next step in the workflow (e.g., approval of a request). (See Abstract and Column 3, lines 10 to 20 of Gadol). Thus, Gadol is seen to disclose that an approval of a request is performed on a client of a user authorized to perform a next stage of the workflow which is the approval process. That is, in Gadol, the approval process is performed on an apparatus of the user authorized to perform a next stage of the workflow, which Applicants submit is the same as the approval service provider terminal as recited in Claims 1, 31 and 61. In contrast, as included in Claims 1, 31 and 61, a decision as to whether or not to approve a prepared approval request is made in an information processing apparatus, which is different than the approval service provider terminal. Therefore, Gadol is not seen to disclose or suggest an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether

or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object.

The remaining applied reference, namely the eFlow article, is not seen to cure the deficiencies of Calver and Gadol. In this regard, the eFlow article is merely seen to disclose a platform that supports specification, deployment, and management of composite e-services. However, the eFlow article is not seen to add anything that, when combined with Calver and/or Gadol, assuming such could be combined, would have resulted in at least the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object.

Accordingly, Claims 1, 31 and 61 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Amended independent Claim 6 is directed to an approval system comprising a service server, an approval service provider terminal and a client terminal, wherein the service server manages plural approval service objects registered by the approval service provider terminal. The client terminal includes approval request preparing means for preparing an approval request based on values entered by a user of the client terminal, and acquisition means for searching for and acquiring an approval service object matching the approval request, among the plural approval service objects registered in the service server, wherein the approval service object includes a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider terminal. The client terminal further includes decision

performing means for performing a decision as to whether or not to approve the approval request by applying the approval request to the decision condition included in the acquired approval service object, and output means for outputting a result of the decision of the decision performing means.

Claims 36 and 62 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 6.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or suggest all the features of Claims 6, 36 and 62, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of a client terminal which includes decision performing means for performing a decision as to whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an acquired approval service object.

As discussed above, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object. For substantially the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claims 1, 31 and 61, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of a client terminal which includes decision performing means for performing a decision as to whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an acquired approval service object.

Accordingly, Claims 6, 36 and 62 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Amended independent Claim 15 is directed to a service server which communicates with an approval service provider terminal and a client terminal. The service server includes approval service storage means for storing plural approval service objects registered by the approval service provider terminal, wherein each of the approval service objects includes a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider terminal. The service server further includes search and transmission means for searching for an approval service object which matches an approval request based on a search instruction received from the client terminal and transmitting the approval service object located by the search to the client terminal. The client terminal decides whether or not to approve the approval request by applying the approval request to the decision condition included in the transmitted approval service object, and the approval request is prepared based on values entered by a user.

Claims 45 and 63 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the server of Claim 15.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or suggest all the features of Claims 15, 45 and 63, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of, a client terminal decides whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in a transmitted approval service object, and the approval request is prepared based on values entered by a user.

As discussed above, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object. For substantially the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claims 1, 31 and 61, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of, a client terminal decides whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in a transmitted approval service object, and the approval request is prepared based on values entered by a user.

Accordingly, Claims 15, 45 and 63 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Amended independent Claim 17 is directed to an approval system comprising an approval service provider terminal, a service server, a client terminal and a request server, wherein the service server manages plural approval service objects registered by the approval service provider terminal, and wherein each of the approval service objects includes a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider terminal. The client terminal includes approval request preparing means for preparing an approval request based on values entered by a user of the client terminal, and the request server includes approval request storage means for storing the approval request prepared in the client terminal. The request server further includes acquisition means for searching for and acquiring an approval service object matching the approval request stored

in the approval request storage means, among the plural approval service objects registered in the service server, decision performing means for performing a decision as to whether or not to approve the approval request by applying the approval request to the decision condition included in the acquired approval service object, and output means for outputting a result of the decision of the decision performing means.

Claims 47 and 64 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 17.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or suggest all the features of Claims 17, 47 and 64, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of a request server which includes decision performing means for performing a decision as to whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an acquired approval service object.

As discussed above, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object. For substantially the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claims 1, 31 and 61, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of a request server which includes decision performing means for performing a

decision as to whether or not to approve an approval request by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an acquired approval service object.

Accordingly, Claims 17, 47 and 64 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Amended independent Claim 29 is directed to an approval system comprising an approval service provider terminal, a service server and a client terminal, wherein the service server manages plural approval service objects registered by the approval service provider terminal, and wherein each of the approval service objects includes a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider. The client terminal includes approval request preparing means for preparing an approval request based on values entered by a user of the client terminal, search means for searching for an approval service object matching the approval request, among the plural approval service objects registered in the service server, transmission means for transmitting the approval request to the service server, in the case that the approval service object is located by the search means, and reception means for receiving the result of approval decision for the approval request transmitted from the service server. The service server includes decision performing means for performing the approval decision for the approval request transmitted from the client terminal by applying the approval request to the decision condition included in the approval service object matching the approval request, and transmission means for transmitting a result of the approval decision to the client terminal.

Claims 59 and 65 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 29.

Amended independent Claim 30 is directed to an approval system comprising an approval service provider terminal, a service server, a client terminal and a request server. The service server manages plural approval service objects registered by the approval service provider terminal, each of the approval service objects includes a decision condition set by a setting unit of the approval service provider, and the client terminal includes approval request preparing means for preparing an approval request based on values entered by a user of the client terminal. The request server includes approval request storage means for storing the approval request prepared in the client terminal, search means for searching for an approval service object matching the approval request stored in the approval request storage means, among the plural approval service objects registered in the service server, transmission means for transmitting the approval service object to the service server, in the case that the approval service object is located by the search means, and reception means for receiving the result of approval decision for the approval request from the service server. The service server includes decision performing means for performing the approval decision for the approval request transmitted from the request server by applying the approval request to the decision condition included in the approval service object matching the approval request, and transmission means for transmitting a result of the approval decision to the request server.

Claims 60 and 66 are directed to a method and a computer program, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 30.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or suggest all the features of Claims 29, 30, 59, 60, 65 and 66, and in particular, is

not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of a service server which includes decision performing means for performing an approval decision for an approval request transmitted from a client terminal by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an approval service object matching the approval request.

As discussed above, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of an information processing apparatus which includes decision means for deciding whether or not to approve a prepared approval request, by applying the prepared approval request to a decision condition included in a stored approval service object. For substantially the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claims 1, 31 and 61, none of Calver, Gadol and/or the eFlow article, either alone or in combination, are seen to disclose or suggest the features of a service server which includes decision performing means for performing an approval decision for an approval request transmitted from a client terminal by applying the approval request to a decision condition included in an approval service object matching the approval request.

Accordingly, Claims 29, 30, 59, 60, 65 and 66 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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